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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

DAILY 49ER

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STEFAN AGREGADO | DAILY 49ER

Jason Le, senior, flies his team's "Hexa-copter" in front of the Outpost yesterday.

Engineering students display senior projects

One group was asked if they were recreating Disney's Wall-E character.

BY ANTHONY GARZA
Staff Writer

About 20 students gathered outside the Outpost Grill Wednesday to see a demo of projects created by senior engineering students.

James Coolidge, Garrett Chan, Gilbert Napenas, Nephtali Mendoza and Mario Madrigal are engineering majors whose project has drawn attention, since they have been testing it in front of the Outpost for several weeks.

Many students were asking the group if they were building a battlebot or a transformer. The wildest thing the group was asked is if they were recreating Wall-E, the Disney movie character.

"People have been asking what it is, but are disappointed when they find out it's a lawnmower," Coolidge said.

The group built an autonomous navigator that uses GPS, sonar and radar to scan an area and mow a field. Simply put, they are building a robotic lawnmower that does the mowing on its own.

"It goes to any of four coordinates and mows the area inside the coordinates," Coolidge said.

The demo turned out to be a great success not just for this group of students, but for another group of students displaying their project.

The other group of students built what they called a "hexacopter" with six spinning blades that levitate it from the ground. The "hexacopter" was remote controlled and flew successfully for roughly two minutes before landing.

For Coolidge's group, the creation of the robotic lawnmower is just the beginning for them. The group is planning on submitting the project to the Institute of Navigation (ION) for the ninth annual ION robotic lawn mower competition in Beavercreek, Ohio.



STEFAN AGREGADO | DAILY 49ER

The "Hexa-copter" flew for two minutes before landing.

The objective of the competition is to design and operate a robotic unmanned lawn mower using navigation to rapidly and accurately cut a field of grass.

Chan said the group had gone back and forth from the drawing board with this project.

"We are full-time students with other projects and classes, so we can't go back to the drawing board as much as we'd like to," Chan said.

The group said they hope their efforts with this project will lead to job opportunities with the either the Institute of Navigation or the Air Force.

ASI candidates guilty of handbook violation

John Haberstroh, Jonathon Bolin lose $25 from their deposits.

BY BRONSON FARR
Staff Writer

Associated Students Inc. candidates John Haberstroh and Jonathon Bolin were found guilty on Monday of violating election handbook regulations by passing out campaign leaflets in the dorms.

The Board of Elections ruled against the duo in a 3-2 vote, according to ASI Elections Officer Leo Palomera. Haberstroh and Bolin will lose $25 each from their election deposits as a result.

Haberstroh, the presidential candidate, and Bolin, the vice presidential candidate, are disappointed about the decision and plan to appeal it.

"The accusers provided no evidence that we or our campaign workers handed stuff out in the dorms," Haberstroh said. "All they had were pictures of stuff laid out, and anyone could have done that."

Bolin also agreed with Haberstroh and said that he, Haberstroh and their workers do not have access to the dorms.

Bolin said the only reason why he and Haberstroh lost was due to intimidation from their accusers. Bolin said he thinks someone is trying to get them in trouble because the ones who brought the charge against Bolin and Haberstroh are running against them.

According to Palomera, Priscilla Covarrubias filed the violation petition.

"What I said was that if [the accusers] brought evidence, we were not going to lie about it," Bolin said.

According to Bolin, he and his running mate filed paperwork for the appeal on Wednesday.

Palomera said case deliberations are still closed off to the public.

"This is just a minor thing," Haberstroh said. "It's being played up as a ridiculous scandal, and it's a waste of time."

CSULB admissions guidelines under review, may take one month

Possible enrollment freezes will not affect the guidelines.

BY ELISABETH MANVILLE
Staff Writer

The possibility of enrollment freezes for fall 2013 at Cal State Long Beach will not affect the implementation of proposed admission guidelines that would change the criteria for admission at the freshman and transfer level.

The proposed changes include requiring major-specific criteria for admission to the university, changing the definition of what it means to be a local student and creating a holistic review program for students from communities with historically low college attendance rates.

On Tuesday, the Cal State University Board of Trustees discussed freezing enrollment for spring and waitlisting eligible applicants for fall 2013, pending the results of two state tax initiatives on the ballot this November.

"The new admissions plan is flexible enough to work with enrollment increases or decreases," said David Dowell, vice provost for planning and budgets and director of strategic planning at CSULB, via email.

The proposed changes were presented to the public during three hearings on Feb. 24 and 29, and March 7.

Last week, President F. King Alexander approved the admissions guidelines proposal, which was then presented to Chancellor Charles B. Reed.

Dowell said the admissions proposal is now under review and is expected to take about a month.

"Fortunately, these new guidelines help us protect our local access despite the massive enrollment reductions facing our campus due to state budget cuts," Alexander said via email. "Our local students also will get greater access to some of our most popular programs which were limited under the selected impaction system."

Under the new guidelines, freshmen and transfer students who are defined as local according to their high school, including several public school districts and private schools in proximity to CSULB, will receive priority admittance to impacted programs. Currently, they do not.

Cal State University spokesman Erik Fallis said the changes CSULB is proposing are separate from the rest of the CSU system. The campus is responding to enrollment issues for which the state hasn't provided support, he said.

He also said that at least one other CSU campus, San Jose State University, is currently in the process of conducting hearings on new enrollment policies.

Marriage, college wed for some students at Cal State Long Beach

Industrial arts major Blake Robertson says marriage should not be taken lightly.

By Alfred Pallarca
Staff Writer

For many college students, juggling classes with a social life and romantic relationships is complicated enough, and yet, some students are deciding now is the time to take those relationships to the next level.

At Cal State Long Beach, some students are in the midst of starting their own family while finishing up their degrees and beginning their professional career.

Bridget Fonseca, senior political science major, recently got engaged to her boyfriend Juan Rodriguez of three and a half years.

"We decided to get engaged because we knew from the start that it is a once-in-a-lifetime chance when you get to marry a person you can truly call your best friend," she said.

Blake Robertson, senior industrial arts major, has been married to his wife Jenna Robertson since his sophomore year at CSULB.

"When we found out that my major is a five-year program, she kind of gave me an ultimatum," he said. "She said, 'We're not waiting till you're done. We have to get married sooner.'"

Robertson and Fonseca agreed that the toughest part is making time, especially with their hectic schoolwork.

"Not being able to see [my fiancé] during the week because of school and work schedules is tough," Fonseca said. "Our time together is limited only on weekends."

Although some people have the idea that marriage means the end of certain friendships and a social life, Robertson disagreed. He said that he is still able to keep his relationships with his close friends and do leisure activities every now and then.

However, Robertson said that his life is more settled compared to someone who is not in such a committed relationship.

"I have responsibilities and priorities that supersede my own desire to have a good time," he said.

Fonseca agreed that being in such a committed relationship has put her more at ease, especially with school and her personal life. She said it has changed her life in several positive ways.

"Being engaged to someone has helped me control my stress," she said. "I have a person always there to hear my problems and struggles. They can give me a different insight on how to improve."

As for Robertson, he said he has been able to put more focus on school now that he has a family to support. Robertson said that, for him, college is a means rather than a place for a social experience.

"I have a certain responsibility to someone else," he said. "I take things more seriously because I need to get through school and get into my career. We want to make time for our plans in the future."

Though Robertson has been happily married for four years, he doesn't think it is a situation for everyone to try while in college

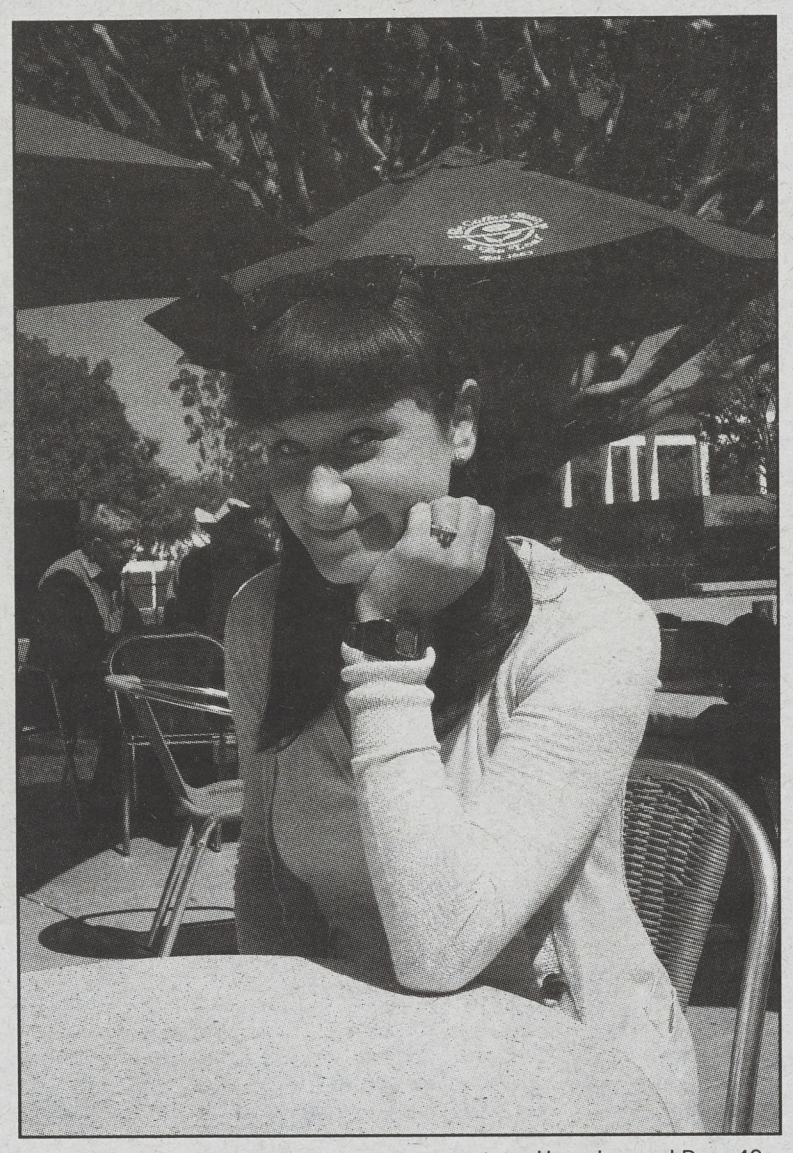
"I don't think people should force something to happen," he said. "You have to look at your own situation and where you are at in life."

Fonseca said that it definitely takes time to find that person that you will truly want to marry.

"I believe once you find them you will truly know because it is a feeling that inhabits your body like no other," she said. "Once that feeling is there no one can take it away and that is how it worked for us."

Robertson advises anyone who wants to try getting married while in college to take it seriously.

"This is a real commitment," he said. "This is probably going to be the most important thing you've done up to that point of your life."



Haley Liddell | Daily 49er

Cal State Long Beach Bridget Fonesca recently got engaged to her boyfriend Juan Rodriguez.

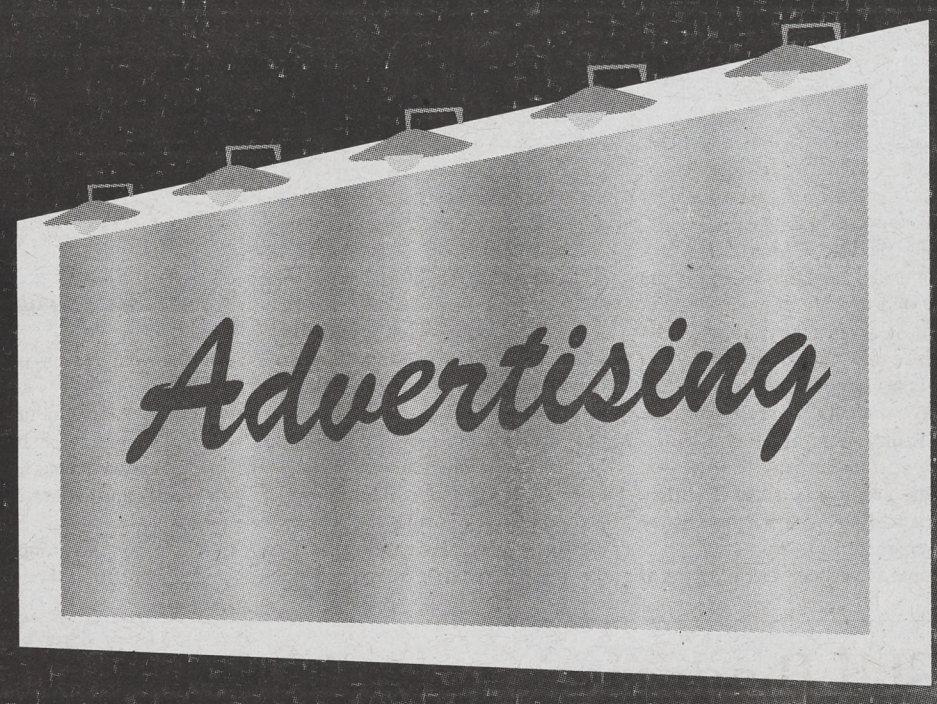
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CSULB Japanese garden campaigns to preserve Bel-Air UCLA garden

The UCLA Hannah Carter Japanese Garden may be sold.

By Jenny Lee
Staff Writer

The Earl Burns Miller Japanese Garden is working with nonprofit organizations to encourage University of California, Los Angeles to preserve its Hannah Carter Japanese Garden, which is currently in danger of being sold.

The organizations, the Garden Conservancy and the North American Japanese Garden Association, along with several others, have joined forces to create the Coalition to Save the Hannah Carter Japanese Garden to spread the word and build community support of keeping the garden intact and open to the public.

In January, UCLA announced plans to sell the garden due to financial pressure caused by steep budget cuts.

Jeanette Schelin, director of the Japanese garden at Cal State Long Beach, attended a public meeting in Bel-Air on Jan. 31 to identify ways to advocate for the preservation of the UCLA Hannah Carter Garden.

Preservationists are hoping to encourage better management practices in order preserve the garden or explore ways to find another organization to take over management of it.

"Many cities have turned over gardens that they cannot run successfully to nonprofit organizations who do run them successfully," Schelin said. "The UCLA garden could fall into this category."

As a member of the coalition, the Earl Burns Miller Japanese Garden has consulted with volunteers working to save the Hannah Carter Japanese Garden on ways they can form a friends support group and also organize events at their garden to generate earned income to cover operating costs, according to Schelin.

"Gardens are precious community resources that are in very short supply," Schelin said. "They take many years to grow and develop but can be destroyed in a short period of time."



Stefan Agregado | Daily 49er

Certain organizations are fighting to keep the Japanese Garden open to the public.

Kendall Brown, a CSULB Asian art history professor and an authority on Japanese gardens in America, spoke at several meetings to emphasize the significance of the Hannah Carter garden. He also talked on the value of Japanese gardens as cultural landmarks and educational resources.

Brown encouraged students to engage in educating the UCLA administration about the historical importance of the garden, its relevance to education and the fact that selling this example of Asian cultural heritage in Los Angeles would be an affront to Asian Americans.

"The Hannah Carter Garden is one of the first major residential gardens built after World War II, signaling the return of Japanese culture to the American mainstream," Brown said.

International students reflect on costs, benefits of living in California

Despite higher fees in California, foreign students enjoy state lifestyle.

By Karina Cornejo
Contributing Writer

International students who attend Cal State Long Beach have to pay additional tuition fees despite not being eligible for federal or state financial aid.

"In addition to the tuition that California residents pay, international students also pay $372 per unit they enroll in," said Nathan Jensen, senior director of the center for international education.

International students also have to deal with transferable and accredited classes.

Jenson said it is not necessarily more difficult for international students to be accepted, it is just more difficult making sure their transcripts are compatible with CSULB's academic policies, such as GE classes.

Nabih Faour, a graduate student majoring in computer science, moved to California from Lebanon in 2009.

"Living almost 10,000 miles away from home is one of the biggest sacrifices a person could make," Faour said.

"I meet people during the week and, on the weekend, they already want to hang out."

-Aram Ghaneet, student

"Of course it is fun, but you are away from family and friends."

He said he can afford CSULB because he saved money in Lebanon and received support from his family. So far, Faour has paid $27,397 in tuition alone.

"I'm lucky enough to have a supportive family," Faour said. "I wouldn't be able to be here if it weren't for them."

Aram Ghaneet, a senior international business major, said he knew that moving from Germany to California would be expensive, so he saved money by working as a photojournalist, as well as a wedding and nightclub photographer.

"I feel a bit broke," Ghaneet said. "I don't have a car and have to ride my bike everywhere."

Ghaneet, who relies on his savings as well as being a German tutor on campus, said it may be expensive to live in California, but the beaches and the warm weather are worth it.

"Living here is expensive, the housing is expensive," Ghaneet said.

Ghaneet said starting a life in California and meeting friendly people was worth the sacrifice. He said if he were given the opportunity, he would do it all over again.

"I meet people during the week and, on the weekend, they already want to hang out," Ghaneet said.

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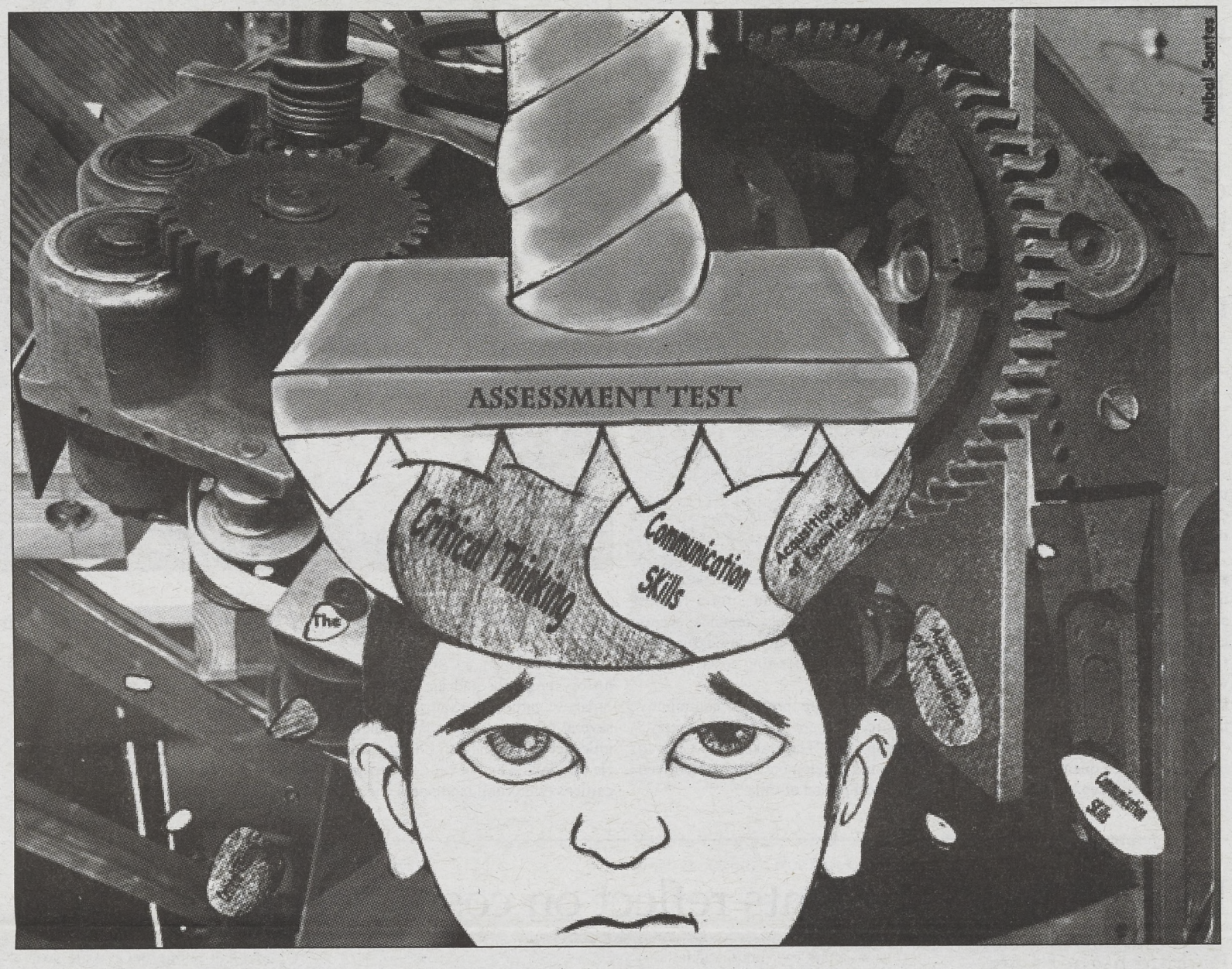
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Test scores should be used to better education



Much like high schools, colleges may soon be responsible for proving that they are effectively teaching students the things they need to learn.

Our View

Certain colleges are starting to implement tests that will tell them if college seniors are leaving their university with more knowledge than they entered with.

At the University of Texas, incoming freshman are given a test called the College Learning Assessment which tests their knowledge of general education requirements. College seniors are given the same test, and the results are compared. According to information that has been released recently, only 36 percent of students show significant increases in learning over their four college years.

What this means is that most students are going through college specifically for the degree instead of to learn. College has become something that students just sit through instead of using it as a tool to better themselves.

A possible solution would be to implement this test at all public schools as a requirement for graduation. Students would have to show improvement over the past four years of school before they are allowed to graduate.

Unfortunately this raises a lot of questions about how this could be used. Unlike public high schools, public colleges cost a lot of money. Implementing a college exit exam could force students who paid thousands for their education to stay in school longer, which would not make sense.

Most likely this test could only be used as information for the school to use to make sure their professors are doing their job.

If students continue to show that they are not improving in math over the years, the school would know to re-examine the math department to see what's going wrong.

There is also the question of which students will be given this test. Students choose all different kinds of classes to fulfill their general education requirements, and it would be difficult to make sure the test covers things that an average student should be learning. The test would have to be very basic to make sure that students who chose to take marine biology instead of regular biology class aren't penalized for their decision.

Even though this test could potentially cause problems, it is worth thinking about. One of the main goals of college is to get a degree so you have a chance at a better job. However, there are a lot of general education classes that students can pass simply by showing up.

If students aren't actually learning anything from these classes they should either not be required to take them or the classes should be changed so that more students take something away from them.

Such a low percentage of students learning from their classes is a troubling statistic, especially compared to how much money it costs an average student these days. A test like the College Learning Assessment should not be made a requirement at all colleges, but it would be an interesting bit of information for our school to have.

It would be nice to know how effective the education that we pay so much for every year really is, and maybe the school could use the information to make our experience better.

CSULB students should make the most of campus resources

College is the time where everyone feels like they should know exactly what they want to do, and have a plan that will tell them exactly how to get there.

It should not have to be that way. Through our college years, we grow up, learn more and encounter new experiences that change our notions about the world. Not knowing where you want to take yourself in the future is not a cause to freak out and it is definitely not the end of the world.

In the two years that I have attended CSULB I have changed my major and added a minor, and I am still not completely convinced that being a business major is right for me. But I'm not worried at all because I know that as long as I apply myself and make the right connections I will end up where I need to be.

The great thing about our campus is that there are tons of resources to help you. Plenty of advisors would be more than willing to schedule an appointment with you and talk about the options you have, or if the major you are considering is right for you.

There are also clubs you can join that will help you get a taste of the careers a certain major has to offer. Even your friends who miraculously have some idea of what they want to be later in life can give you some advice or speak to you about their major.

Rebecca Ruiz

After my friend found out she wouldn't be able to make it into the business major, she asked around and found out about the University Center for Undergraduate Advising located in our very own Horn Center. They take walk-ins and appointments and are extremely understanding and helpful.

My friend described her experience and told me that they asked questions about her interests and extracurricular activities to really try and help her fit into a major that would eventually lead to a career she would enjoy. They also told her that balance is important, which I believe is the key to succeeding in college.

Many students take on the maximum number of units while also trying to balance jobs and it rarely ever turns out in something other than you being a tired mess.

Thus, instead of taking on a gigantic workload, take on the number of units you feel you can do your best in while also getting your job done correctly. And if you don't have a job, enjoy your social life and extracurricular activities to the fullest. I know way too many people who complain about being drained and tired all the time. We are too young to be as tired as we claim to be.

At the end of the day, don't freak out if you haven't the slightest clue what to do with your life. Ask around and explore. Your tuition is used to pay for the resources on campus so use them to your advantage. And never take more than you can handle because the outcome won't be what you expected.

Rebecca Ruiz is a senior business major and a contributing writer for the Daily 49er.

Daily 49er

Zien Halwani
Editor in Chief
eicd49er@gmail.com
(562) 985-7998

Caitlin O'Connor
Managing Editor
managingd49er@gmail.com
(562) 985-8000

Editorial Office
Phone (562) 985-8000
Fax (562) 985-7994
1250 Bellflower Blvd., SSPA 004B
Long Beach, CA
90840-4601

Display Advertising
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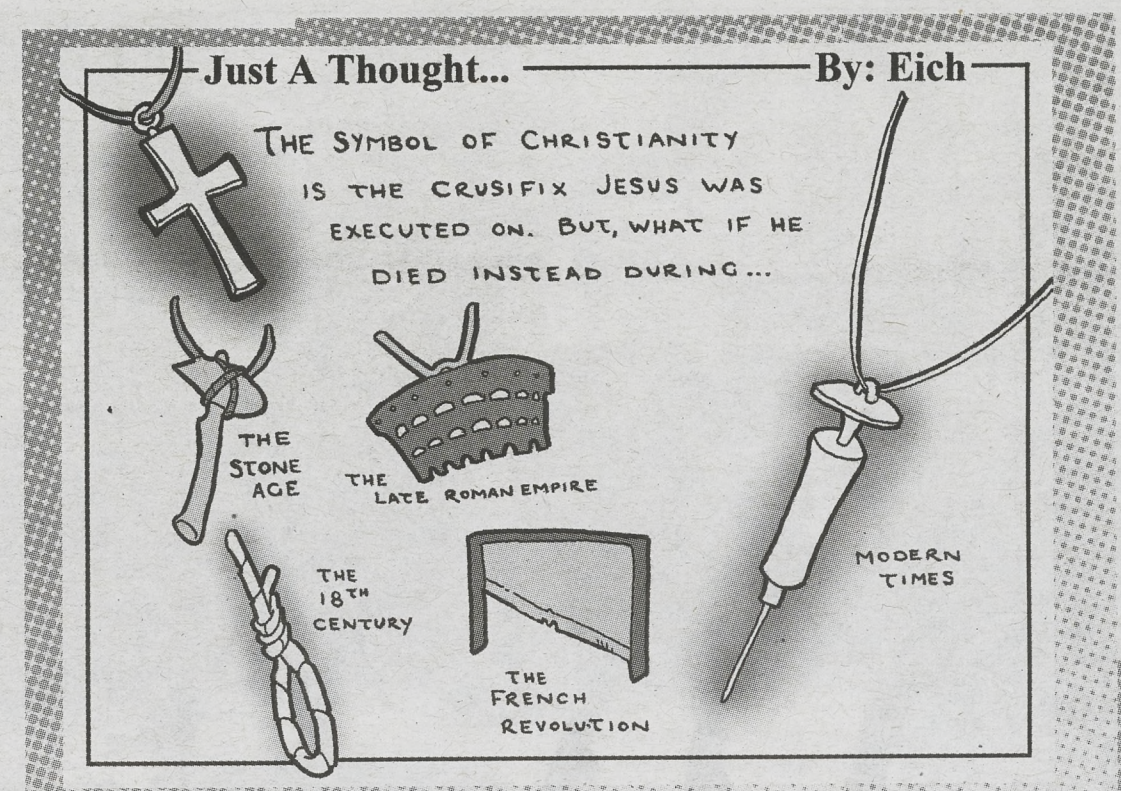
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Business Office
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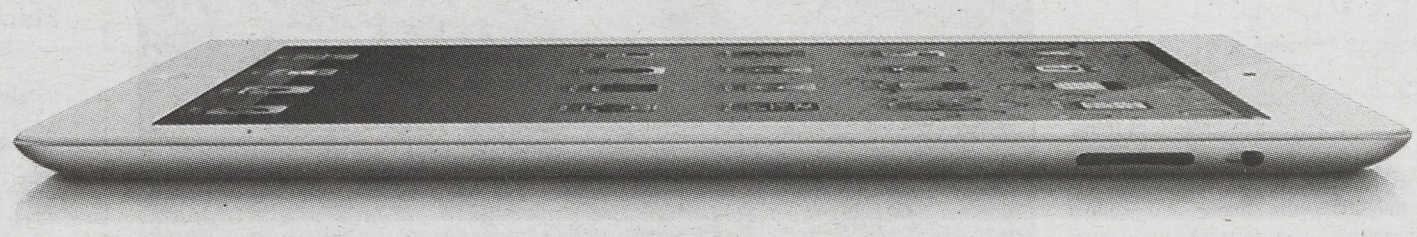
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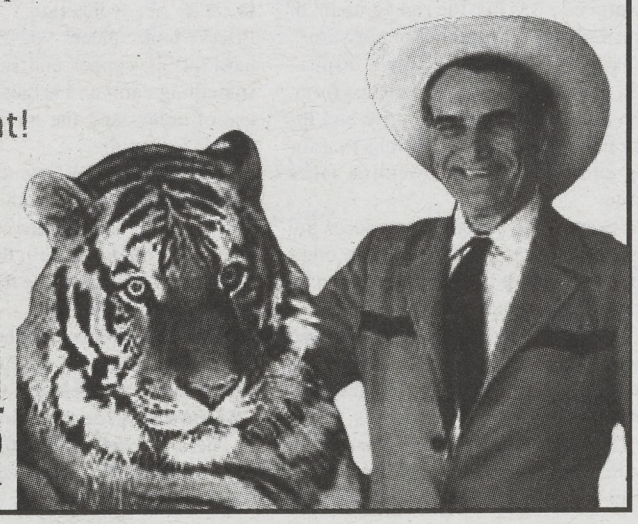


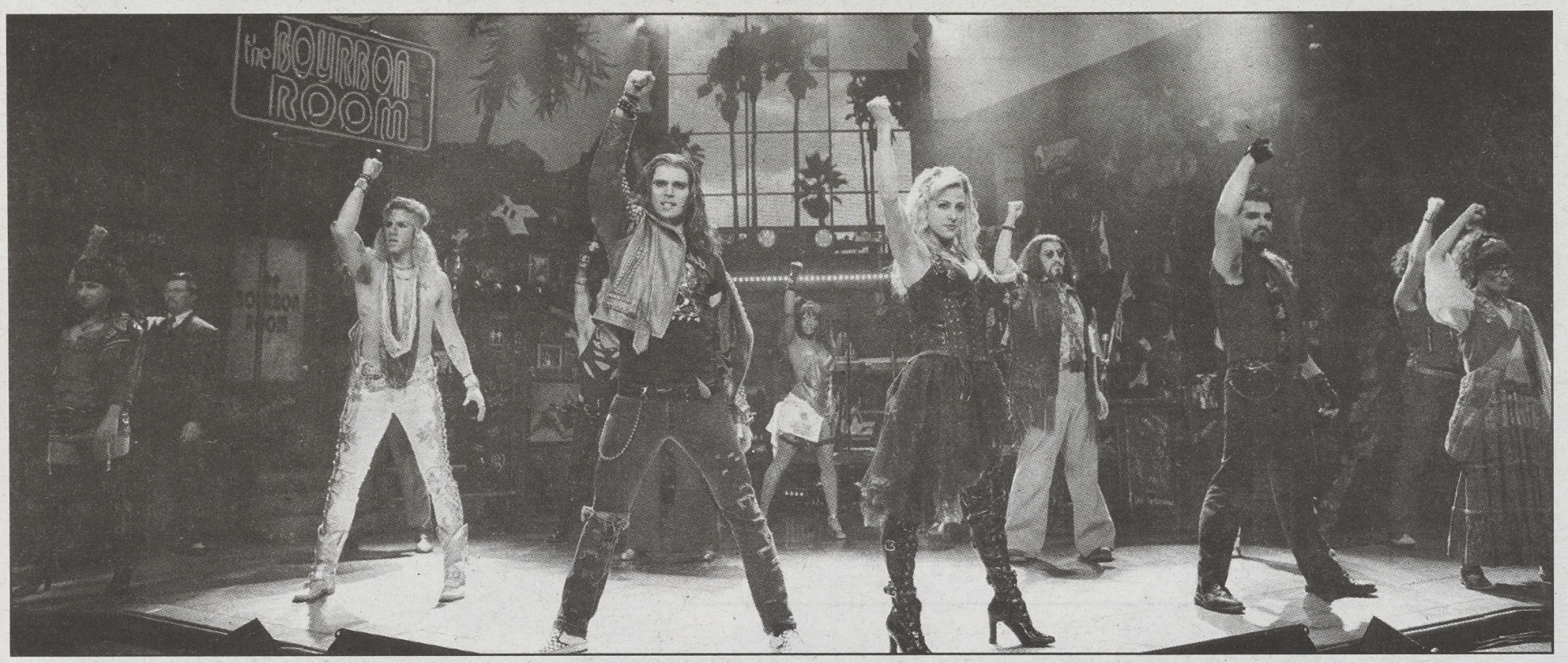
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SCOTT SUCHMAN

"Rock of Ages," the smash Tony Award nominated musical based on 1980s hair band songs, will run at the Pantages Theatre in Los Angeles until Sunday, March 25.

'Rock of Ages' brings '80s hair band music to the Pantages Theatre

The show is filled with nostalgic hits and a fun storyline.

BY BRITTANY WOOLSEY
Diversions Editor

The Pantages Theatre blasts back to the "mid-to-late 1980s" with "Rock of Ages," a five-time Tony Award nominated smash-hit musical.

The show starts off with a bang, with a live band immediately engaging the crowd with "Cum on Feel the Noize" by Quiet Riot. This makes the show seem more like a concert than a musical. However, the crowd is quickly reminded that they are attending a theatrical production when Lonny (Justin Colombo) steps on the stage to introduce the storyline.

"When you're putting on a musical, you should have a fu-king love story," Lonny proclaims.

The plot revolves around Drew (Dominique Scott), a wannabe rock star who works at The Bourbon Room on Sunset Strip in Los Angeles. He falls for Sherrie (Shannon Mullen), a small town girl who came to Los Angeles looking for an acting job, only to be approached by several porn companies. The two go on a date, but Drew mistakenly tells Sherrie that he wants to be "friends" — when he really wants more.

The Bourbon Room faces demolition when Hertz (Phillip Peterson) and his overly flamboyant son Franz (Michael Kane) decide they want to demolish Sunset Strip to turn it into a strip mall. Lonny, along with Bourbon Room owner Dennis (Matt Ban), decide they need to try to save their bar/venue.

They decide that hosting Arsenal's, one of the biggest bands, last show would be a way to draw in revenue so they wouldn't be shut down. Stacee Jaxx (Matt Nolan), the chauvinistic lead singer of Arsenal, agrees to this. When Arsenal comes to town, Stacee decides he wants to have sex with Sherrie, and ends up screwing her over after actually screwing her. He leaves her jobless and without Drew's affection. Drew continues his search for stardom, while Sherrie finds herself down a road she never wanted to be on.

The musical is filled with big hair band hits from the '80s, including ballad-like renovations of "More than Words" by Extreme and "Heaven Isn't Too Far Away" by Warrant. The '80s songs fit perfectly into the storyline, and are used as a means to introduce different plot points and character feelings. Many of the song inclusions are clever, and they are recognizable enough for any crowd member, regardless of age, to sing along.

Particular fun song moments include Journey's "Anyway You Want It," which is used to introduce various strippers in the show, and Franz's over-the-top rendition of Pat Benatar's "Hit Me With Your Best Shot." However, possibly the most fun song of the show is Lonny's and Dennis's duet, "I Can't Fight This Feeling" by Reo Speedwagon. The two make the song comical as they are shown dancing together and share comical intimacy.

The cast is also outstanding. Scott portrays Drew as an awkward nerd, which makes him very easy to sympathize with and root for. However, he possesses strong vocals to show that he really does have rock star potential, even though his lyrics may be overly sexual and lame.

On the other hand, Mullen as Sherrie is bubbly and extremely confident. Though a little dense at times, she is charming. Her pop vocals add some modernism to the show's music, and her rendition of "More Than Words" is captivating. One cannot help but sing along and sympathize with how much Sherrie cares for Drew as she sings the ballad.

Noteworthy mentions also go to Momma (Amma Osei), who does a breathtaking, gospel-like performance of "Every Rose Has its Thorn" by Poison. Ban and Colombo are also hilarious, and it's really a treat to have them included in almost every scene. Even when serious moments happen on stage, the duo is there to offer some comic relief.

Overall, the show is delightful and a good time for any music lover. The songs are easy to sing-along to, and the play's homage to the 1980s is very accurate, with many references to the era. "Rock of Ages" will also open as a major motion picture, starring Tom Cruise and Alec Baldwin, this summer.

"Rock of Ages" will run at the Pantages Theatre until March 25, with shows Tuesday through Friday at 8 p.m.; Saturday at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and Sunday at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Ticket prices range from $25 to $100, and are available on BroadwayLA.org. The Pantages Theatre is located at 6233 Hollywood Blvd.

Student artist shows a different side of metal

BY LESLIE CAMPOS
Staff Writer

An MFA metal student and fine arts teacher displays her colorful collection of welded copper sheets entitled "Autotelic" in the Gatov student gallery this week.

Elise Priess, a native of France, showcases her 10-piece senior MFA show as her final requirement before graduating.

"I work with enameling and blacksmithing," Priess said. "It's a very gentle process. It is just the right amount of heat and the right amount of pressure."

Priess said that she draws inspiration from where the metal comes from. She finds depth, color, texture and inspiration in aerial photographs in mining sites, where metal welding takes place.

Seven of the copper sheet pieces are displayed in the gallery and the other three are smaller brooch pieces worn by Priess, her husband and daughter.

All seven of the floor pieces displayed have a weightless, air-like quality. Some were designed to look as though they had been whisked away by the wind.

The type of metal Priess focused on for her show was copper. She added colorful glass powder to this reddish-orange sheet to create the bright pink, purple and yellows in her pieces.

Priess also uses transparent glass powder on the sheets and lets the flame and copper go through its natural process of oxidation to create greens, blues and darker colors.

The colors and textures of the pieces show the direction in which the artist was trying to take her collection. Priess took pieces of hard-hitting copper and turned it into something calm and bright through the use of colors and the manipulation of metals for texture.

"Autotelic" shows how the artist manipulates the copper with fire. Priess said it's as if she is drawing with fire. Once she is satisfied with the sheet, she adds texture to it with the flame and finishes with the wax.

After she finishes the sheet, she creates the rod that will hold up the sheet depending on the weight of the sheet and the form she wished the entire piece to be.

The artist then buffs, files or sandblasts the colorful, texturized pieces of sheet metal to remove any sharp edges and makes them completely soft to the touch and wearable.



KYUSUNG GONG | DAILY 49ER

Elise Priess' metal art is currently on display in the Gatov student art gallery.

She takes pieces of the large sheets of copper after she has gone through her entire process and makes small wearable pieces from that.

Some of the featured floor pieces also show movement and weightlessness, while other pieces are firm and resembled an actual stand.

The rod is the last part of the piece in order to accommodate the sheet, which is the main focus. The 10-piece collection took three months to complete.

Preiss said the collection only took three weeks but there was a lot of planning prior to it. She made multiple small scale wire models.

She said her artwork is meant to be enjoyed by all, which is the best thing about being in such a large university. People of all majors are exposed to her art.

"I don't want to impose anything on anybody," Preiss said. "I want people to wonder how, why and what material it is. I want to spark interest and curiosity from the audience."

She hopes to set up a studio in her home after graduation to continue making art that pleases her audience.

"Autotelic" will be on display in the Gatov Gallery until March 22 at 5 p.m.

The student art galleries are open Sundays from 5 – 7 p.m.; Mondays through Thursdays from noon to 5 p.m.; and Wednesdays from noon to 7 p.m.

Campus Calendar

March 22

Student art galleries
The **art department** presents **student art galleries**, MFA metals, printmaking and photography from **noon to 5 p.m.** The student art galleries are located between the **FA2 and FA3** buildings. Admission is **free.**

'Metal Machine Trio'
The **University Art Museum** presents **"Lou Reed, Metal Machine Trio: The Creation of the Universe"** from **noon to 5 p.m.** Admission is **free** for students, **$4** for general.

'Static Noise'
The **University Art Museum** presents **"Static Noise: The Photographs of Rhona Bitner"** from **noon to 5 p.m.** Admission is **free** for students, **$4** for general.

'Side Show'
The University Players present **"Side Show"** by Bill Russell and Henry Krieger, directed by Joanne Gordon at **8 p.m.** in the **Studio Theatre**. Tickets are **$12** for students and **$15** for general admission.

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'Niners look to stride into Big West Play

The 49ers 5-2 win over Loyola Marymout gives them a boost going into their conference schedule.

By Jason Clark
Staff Writer

The Long Beach State softball team wrapped up its non-conference schedule with a 5-2 win over Loyola Marymount on Wednesday and will begin Big West Conference play next week.

Sophomore starting pitcher Erin Jones-Wesley tossed a complete-game to lead the 'Niners to a three-run victory. Freshman Leilani Tupua-Tautalatasi and junior Nalani St. Germain each produced two-RBI performances as the 49ers improved their record to 12-18 on the season.

Loyola Marymount's Sam Fischer had one of the few solid hits against Jones-Wesley, as she slugged her 14th home run of season. Fischer is one of the nation's top hitters, but was unable to help her team overcome a four-run fourth inning outburst by the 49ers.

It was big win for LBSU, which needed the momentum heading into an ever-important Big West schedule.

A Big West title is currently the 49ers' only way to make the NCAA tournament. With 18 losses already this season, it's nearly impossible for them to receive an at-large bid. As conference champions, however, they would automatically qualify for the NCAA tournament.

The 'Niners opened the year as co-favorites to win the Big West, tying with Pacific atop the preseason coaches' poll with four first-place votes apiece. After the season, LBSU has had so far, however, Sowder doesn't have any specific expectations for conference play.

"We've had a lot of changes throughout the season with injuries, so it's hard to kind of set expectations at this point," Sowder said. "It's really just up to us to decide how good we really want to be."

At 14-12, Pacific is the only Big West team to make it through nonconference play with a winning record. The Tigers field an experienced team led by senior Nicole Matson, who has 7 home runs and 25 RBI so far this season.

"Pacific is definitely the frontrunner, they won last year and they have their entire team back," Sowder said. "But in this conference every team can beat any other team on any given day."

Aside from Pacific, Cal State Fullerton and UC Riverside provide the biggest tests.

Fullerton has had a historically strong softball program and finished third in the Big West preseason poll. This season, the Titans have relied heavily on their offense, as a 5.79 team ERA hasn't done them any favors defensively.



Steven Carcano | Daily 49er

Erin Jones-Wesley, above, will lead LBSU into conference play.

UC Riverside is without a doubt the surprise team so far, as it was given little respect in the preseason poll — finishing last. At 12-14, however, the Highlanders sport the second-best record in the Big West. They are led by junior outfielder Kayla White, who is hitting .342 with 4 home runs, 4 triples and 26 RBIs.

The 49ers will open conference play with a road trip to Santa Barbara on March 31. The end of the season is where things could get interesting, as they will face Fullerton and Pacific to close out the year.

"We're going to focus just on that first Santa Barbara game and go from there," Sowder said. "Hopefully we're in position at the end where those games count."

Monson named District 9 Coach of the Year

The 'Niners head coach earned the honor in addition to being named Big West Coach of the Year.

By Daily 49er Sports Staff

Long Beach State men's basketball team head coach Dan Monson was named Division I District 9 Coach of the Year for the second straight season.

The award, which is voted on by The National Association of Basketball Coaches, was given to the 49ers coach for the second straight season. Monson was one of 24 coaches in Division I college basketball to receive the award. He was also named the Big West Conference Coach of the Year.

Monson led the 'Niners to a 25-9 overall record this season, including a 15-1 mark in Big West play. He guided LBSU to its first NCAA tournament appearance since 2007, where they eventually lost to the University of New Mexico.

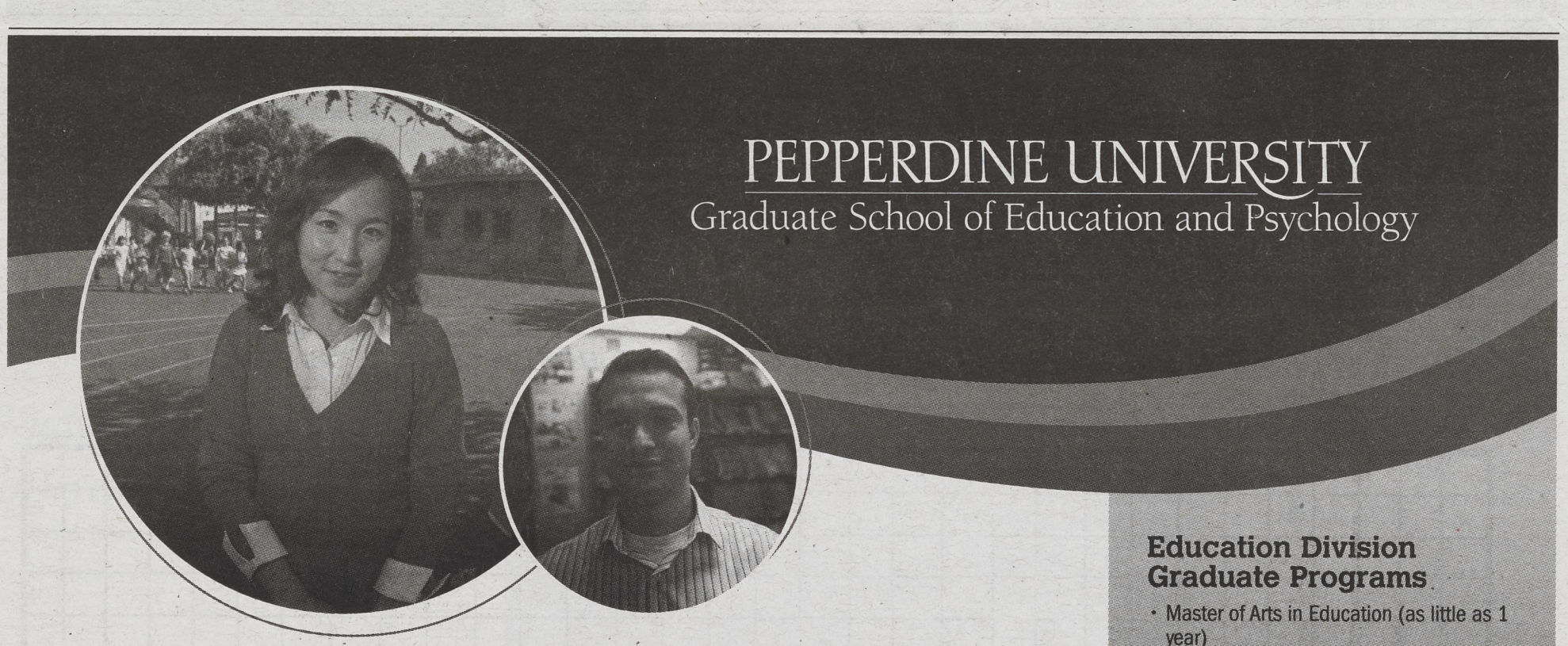


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Dan Monson, right, was named District 9 Coach of the Year.

Monson became the first Long Beach State coach to win back-to-back regular season championships in 35 years. He is also the first 'Niners head coach to win at least 20 games in consecutive seasons in 38 years.

The fifth-year coach navigated his squad through the toughest nonconference schedule in the country, which included games against North Carolina, Kansas, Pittsburgh, Kansas State, Xavier, San Diego State and Louisville.



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